



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First 2016 Human West Nile Virus Deaths in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has confirmed the three human West Nile virus-related deaths in Illinois for 2016. Three individuals in Cook County tested positive for West Nile virus earlier this month and have died.

“Although fall has begun and temperatures are becoming cooler, West Nile virus is still a concern,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “It’s important for everyone to continue taking precautions like wearing insect repellent and staying indoors between dusk and dawn.”

IDPH reported the first human case of West Nile virus in Illinois this year on June 6, 2016 and IDPH is currently reporting 64 human cases. Last year there were 77 human cases, including nine deaths.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito. Common symptoms include fever, nausea, headache and muscle aches. Symptoms may last from a few days to a few weeks. However, four out of five people infected with West Nile virus will not show any symptoms. In rare cases, severe illness including meningitis or encephalitis, or even death, can occur. People older than 50 and immunocompromised individuals are at higher risk for severe illness.

Surveillance for West Nile virus in Illinois includes laboratory tests on mosquito batches, dead crows, blue jays, robins and other perching birds, as well as testing sick horses and humans with West Nile virus-like symptoms.

Remember to take some simple precautions to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and protect yourself from being bitten.

- Minimize being outdoors when mosquitoes transmitting West Nile virus are most active, especially between dusk and dawn.
- When outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535, according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water where mosquitoes can breed, such as old tires, buckets and other receptacles, or refresh the water in bird baths, flowerpots and wading pools every couple days.

Additional information about West Nile virus can be found on the IDPH website. 745**16

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